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ABSTRACT

A study examined personal written responses of novice white teachers to address methods, patterns, and implications of teachers' responses to powerful and provocative multicultural children's literature. Ten children's books were read orally and 150 responses from 15 graduate students in an elementary education course were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Results indicated that: (1) the most emotionally powerful books were those pertaining to the Holocaust, drugs and their proliferation, and paternal neglect and abuse; (2) teachers reacted negatively to descriptive words, language and writing style of the most socially provocative books; (3) all teachers would use the books about gender in their classrooms; (4) books about war would be used, but not those with graphic details of the sadness of human experience; and (5) teachers were unexpectedly cautious in revealing personal reactions to the books. Findings suggest that an education course to develop teachers' sensitivity to diversity is a good beginning of awareness, but changing white, middle-class teachers' values and attitudes must take many varied and sustained approaches. (Contains 33 references and 3 figures of data.) (EF)

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Provocative and Powerful Children's Literature - Developing Teacher Knowledge and Acceptance of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

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It takes no stretch of the imagination to say that most U.S. schools are Eurocentric in their approaches to teaching. Elementary readers, high school anthologies and other textbooks overwhelmingly contain the views of European Americans and marginalize the perspectives of people from non-Western heritages. Simultaneously, there is a predominance of white teachers in classrooms. Yet the ethnic and cultural demographics of the U.S. student population have so dramatically changed that many U.S. schools are comprised only of Asian, Latino and African American children. Unfortunately, many white teachers do not understand the impact of ethnicity and culture on children's learning, and consequently many children of color are disproportionately retained and referred to special education.

In many areas of the country issues of social equity and power, both historical and contemporary, are slowly being reexamined. Teacher educators are particularly concerned about making schools more equitable and democratic for all children and are actively recruiting students of color into teaching, as well as preparing white teachers into becoming culturally sensitive to the learning needs of all children. In this study we examined the written responses of novice teachers who participated in a multicultural literature course. We describe and explain teachers responses to the literature and then present ideas for helping teachers become more knowledgeable and skilled when presenting issues of social justice in their own classrooms.

Contemporary children's literature frequently contains rich illustrations and narratives about ethnic and cultural diversity. Recent award winning picture books are good examples: Smokey Night (Bunting, 1994) describes the feelings of families and children during an inner-city riot, and Grandfather's Journey (Say, 1993) is a cross cultural book describing a Japanese man's immigration to the United States. Chapter books often contain narratives about social justice. This year's Newberry winner, Bud, Not Buddy (Curtis, 1999), is a tale of an African American, motherless boy in search of his father. Out of the Dust (Hess, 1997) describes the survival of an adolescent girl during the Southwest dust bowl. Maniac Magee (Spinelli, 1990) presents the

adventures of a homeless boy as he searches for family in black and white neighborhoods, and Number the Stars (Lowry, 1989) depicts the holocaust through children's eyes. Children's literature can be quite frank and direct in its depiction of social conflict and justice, and it is the literature we used with teachers in our study.

School books are known to reflect the values, attitudes, and experiences of the dominant social group (Edelsky, 1992; Shannon, 1989; Sleeter and Grant, 1991). Kohl (1996) and Taxel (1993) argue children's literature selected for classrooms typically supports the existing social structure and ignores the voices and experiences of exploited and marginalized people. Years ago Larrick (1965) explained that children's literature represents a "selective tradition" in which particular values, beliefs, ideologies and traditions are deliberately supported or omitted by publishers. Sims (1982) has argued that some children's books are written simply to evoke sympathy about diversity, seldom sharing real insights about the experiences of ethnic minority groups.

Many people are aware of the lack of ethnic and cultural diversity in the teaching force. That is, while the diversity of the student population has increased tremendously, the corps of teachers has remained predominantly white and of Western European background (King, 1993; National Center for Education Statistics, 1996). The problem is that white teachers often know little about the cultural experiences of the African American, Latino, Asian and Middle Eastern children they teach. In addition, white teachers are often, consciously or unconsciously, insensitive and biased against children's life experiences which they have not seen or do not understand.

Teacher education programs have responded to the lack of ethnic diversity in the teaching force in a variety of ways.They have added multicultural coursework (Adams, Bell and Griffin, 1997; Derman-Sparks and Burnson Phillips, 1997), required practica in ethnically diverse settings, and presented methods to prospective teachers for helping them become culturally responsive. For example, Covill-Hall, MacDonald and Smolen (1995) describe a popular diversity course for preservice teachers at their university that offers discussion, problem solving and practica

experiences about teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. Wiest (1998) emphasized the value of an immersion experience that develops preservice teachers' understanding about cultural diversity. Allen (1999) shared how action research groups can help classroom teachers become more sensitive and skillful when instructing diverse learners. Roberts (1998) explained how literature study groups can heighten reading teachers' knowledge of the effects of class and privilege on children's literacy development. Recently Florio-Roane et al. (1999) shared how literature circles, where teachers read ethnic autobiographies, improved white teachers' views about the interrelationships of literacy, schooling and cultural identity.

Response theory, a central component of our study, originates from Rosenblatt's work (1938/83). She defined efferent reading as reading for information whereas aesthetic reading pertained to the feelings and images readers construct with literature. Langer (1990) discovered a series of response-based "stances" or positions that readers assume when engaged with literature, and her "stances" reveal increasing or decreasing reader involvement with text. Recently, Gaskins (1996) found that readers' emotional involvement with a topic can have an important impact on their interpretation of a text -- readers who are personally involved and affiliated with a story will construct different interpretations of texts than those who are disassociated. In terms of ethnicity and culture, Gaskins' findings suggest that the emotional connections or disassociations teachers have with literature about social justice will influence and shape their classroom instruction when using it.

In our study, we analyzed the personal, written responses of novice white teachers to children's literature containing themes of social justice. We suspected their personal responses about this literature would affect their decisions about whether they would select the books for their own classrooms and how the books might be used. More specifically, we researched the following questions:

1. How do novice white teachers respond to powerful and provocative multicultural children's literature?

2. What patterns/stances appear in novice teachers' responses to books about diversity?

3. What are the implications of these findings for teacher education and classroom teaching?

Method

Fifteen graduate students participated in this study. Our college is located in upstate New York in a small, urban community on the Hudson River. The students were predominantly white and of Western European ethnicities. They were all novice teachers: some had classroom teaching positions and others were recently certified. The group contained some cultural diversity of which we were aware: one teacher was raised by an African American step-father and a two were Jewish.

The context for the study is that of our graduate course in elementary education, "Social Justice Through Reading Children's Literature." We have offered this course once a year since the Rodney King verdict in California. At that time we realized that our teacher education program needed to do much more in preparing teachers for social and ethnically diverse classrooms. Our student body, like most other teacher education programs, has consisted largely of white students of Western European ancestry. Although we offered a children's literature course that was well received by students for many years, it typically focused on mainstream literature. That is, students read a variety of literature, but most of the titles represented stories from their own social and cultural backgrounds - white and European American. Only rarely did the students read books written by people of color or works depicting the experiences of under-represented groups. For these reasons we decided to offer a new course that focused explicitly on issues of ethnicity, class, gender, language, disability and sexual orientation. The intent of the course has been to develop teachers understanding of diversity and help them learn literature depicting these issues so that they could better examine the same issues through literature in their own classrooms.

We used qualitative and quantitative data for this study. For ten days we orally read socially provocative and emotionally powerful books about social justice to our students in multicultural literature. After each reading we asked students to compose a written response as to whether they would use the book with elementary children and to explain their reasoning. We previously

identified the illustrated books as being rich examples of literature that grappled with ethnic and cultural diversity (Figure 1). At the final class meeting we asked the teachers to complete a Likert scale, with rankings of 1 to 5, asking students to identify the extent to which they perceived each of the books as emotionally powerful and socially provocative.

We selected books that confronted social assumptions and values about family, ethnicity and color, disability, gender, war and conflict, and sexual orientation. Using books like these required teachers to use a split focus. That is, teachers needed to not only consider the impact of the books on themselves as listeners/readers but also to consider the effects the books might have on children. After each reading we asked the teachers to write a response to the following question: "What would be your response if you were asked to use this book in your elementary classroom?" We gave the teachers ten minutes to compose their responses.

Figure I: Annotated list of Books Used in Study

Abells, Chana Byers. The Children We Remember. Greenwillow Books, 1986. A non-fiction, photographic book about the Holocaust.

Boyd, Candy Dawson. Daddy, Daddy, Be There. Philomel Books, 1995. A contemporary realistic fiction about family strife and abuse)

Browne, Anthony. Piggybook. Dragonfly Books, 1986. A humorous story about gender roles in one family.

Bunting, Eve. Terrible Things. The Jewish Publication Society,1989. An allegory about the holocaust.

Fleming, Virginia. Be Good to Eddie Lee. Philomel Books, 1993. A narrative about social relationships between a Down Syndrome child and non-disabled children.

Herron, Carolivia. Nappy Hair. Alfred A. Knopf, 1997. A patterned, two voice text discussing the physical characteristics of African American hair.

Miller, William. Zora Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree. Lee & Low Books, 1994. A biographic account of the famous writer's early years at home.

Quinlan, Patricia. Tiger Flowers. Dial Books for Young Readers, 1994. A narrative about a family's love for a member with AIDS.

Taylor, Clark. The House that Crack Built. Chronicle Books, 1992. A patterned text discussing the harvest and marketing of hard drugs.

Tsuchiya, Yukio. Faithful Elephants. Houghton Mifflin, 1988. A narrative depicting the extermination of zoo animals in Tokyo during WWII.

At the conclusion of the study we had obtained 150 written responses to the selected literature about social diversity and used an analytic strategy to examine them. We first examined the teachers' written responses to learn if they would read these books with students. Written

responses were categorized as to whether the teachers were supportive of using a book in school, hesitant, or averse to its use. We then looked for supporting reasons as to why teachers felt the way they did. Next we identified those books from the Likert scale that teachers felt were most and least socially provocative and emotional. In addition, we examined their written responses to discover patterns and categories that emerged in the teachers' thoughts about this literature.

Results

The Emotionally Powerful Books

The most emotionally powerful books were those pertaining to the holocaust, drugs and their proliferation, and paternal neglect and abuse. Teachers ranked The Children We Remember as the book that touched them most emotionally (see figure 2). This particular book contains stark, black and white photographs of children and their European town before and after WWII. Although it was the most emotionally powerful book, the teachers also indicated that they would use it in elementary classrooms. Teachers admitted it would be a difficult read, but they said it was an important one because it could help children better understand events like Kosovo, which was occurring at the time we read the book. One of the teachers wrote the actual photographic portraits of children "shows kids that this was a very real event; sometimes drawn pictures make kids think of 'make believe' topics..." The same teacher wrote, "The words are so simple and any grade level could relate to it...I especially liked the way the author gave names to each of the children [in the photos]..."Another teacher wrote, "The Holocaust is something the children need to learn about and I think this book is an excellent starting point."

Figure 2: The Most Emotionally Powerful Books

Rank	*Title*
1.	The Children We Remember
2.	The House that Crack Built
3a.	Daddy, Daddy Be There
3b.	Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust

The House that Crack Built appeared second in the teachers' rankings of emotionally

powerful books. The setting for this story begins in a warm tropical climate and ends in a contemporary urban area, although the specific locations are not identified. Teachers wrote about how well this story would fit with the popular drug prevention program, DARE, which typically begins in fourth grade classrooms in our area. Teachers explained that this topic was a very familiar one for their children, and the book would lend itself well to discussions about the effects of individual choice in everyday life. One teacher wrote, " The book can help students see the real problem and understand the idea of choice. Sensitivity, of course, should be used with this topic. Many students have mothers, fathers, brothers, and sometimes other family members who are involved in drugs."

Daddy, Daddy Be There and Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust tied for the third place in teachers' rankings for most emotionally powerful books. Many of the teachers responded personally to Daddy, Daddy Be There by justifying why they liked or did not like the book. One third of the teachers questioned the appropriateness of the text for a young audience. For example, one teacher wrote that she did not like where the story "took a dark turn" with screaming and abuse." Another wrote she did not like the page where "...the father is drinking and becomes aggressive." A teacher wrote, "Since I was two I did not have a father and did not know the effects until later in life...how does this book help?" And another said, "It would upset children...remind them of their loss of a father...it might evoke a negative response among children."

Yet, two thirds of the teachers indicated children could relate to the story because of the presence or absence of their own fathers in their lives. "I would feel comfortable using it because single parent homes are so common today," one teacher wrote. Another of the teachers said, "I think this is a wonderful way to show children that all types of families share common issues...the authors wrote this for children who struggle with one parent households, divorce and/or uncertain relationships...So many of the students in my classroom are faced with the absence of their fathers."

Terrible Things tied for third in its emotional impact, and all of the teachers indicated they would use it, even with primary grade children. The teachers said that Bunting's use of animals as the only characters in the story made the horrific account of the Holocaust understandable, even for young children. One teacher wrote that she would even use the book with high school students because it took such a complex issue and made it understandable: "So often in my own high school classroom I hear students talk about groups of people as 'those people' or 'them.' They seem to be so far removed and unconcerned about what happens to 'those people.' Bunting simplifies the concept of people thinking 'It can't happen to them."Another teacher wrote from a more political point of view, " This book could be used to spark discussions on responsibility and loyalty to any community and its members. The community could be a family, a classroom, a school. There is power in numbers -- working together for the common good is better in the long run than looking out just for yourself. Students can learn that when threatened from the outside, it is everyone's responsibility to pull together and respond to the threat..." One student wrote, "I think this book is a great way to teach about prejudice. I think it would help kids to understand that is not right to exclude someone because of the color of their skin or the way they look and the fact that it sometimes can only take one person to help make a difference."

The Socially Provocative Books

Teachers identified Nappy Hair as the most socially provocative book from the ones we read aloud. We are not surprised at this ranking giving the notoriety it received when a novice teacher used it in a Brooklyn elementary school (New York Times, 1998). However, the teachers reacted negatively to the book because they did not like the descriptive words used in the text, such as "tangled-up" and "screwed-up." They also indicated that they thought the book would be too easily misconstrued by children and parents as a criticism of African American hair. One teacher commented that she thought some teachers would be uncomfortable with a discussion of God and religion in the text for public school.

Figure 3 The Most Socially Provocative Books

Rank	*Title*
1	Nappy Hair
2	The House That Crack Built
3	The Children We Remember

Teachers reacted negatively to the language and the writing style of Nappy Hair . They said it would better fit with older students. Some of the teachers did not like the story line. One teacher candidly wrote, "I would be afraid to use this book in my classroom...I don't think I would even have it on my classroom bookshelves." Another teacher wrote, "If I was African American, I would be uncomfortable having this book read by a white teacher and in front of white classmates. There are some books that are more appropriate to read at home with your family, and I think this is one of them. This book would be more empowering if read by an African American to an African American audience."

The House That Crack Built ranked second in the teachers' scoring of socially provocative books. Slightly more than 50% said they would use the book in the elementary school. In general these teachers perceived the book to be important for classroom discussions, they liked the rhyme of the text, and the illustrations. A teacher wrote, "I like rhyming books and I feel somehow these rhymes soften the message, even though the words are tough." "I especially liked the illustrations, particularly the one with the woman's head upside down. This symbolizes that crack or drugs turns your life upside down by messing with your head."

Many of the teachers commented as to how The House That Crack Built would stimulate classroom discussion. One wrote, "I would discuss what the author is suggesting about the entire system. I would ask the students why they thought the people were using drugs: what does he mean by "the city in pain'?...I would talk about [other] opportunities available to do things that are enjoyable and fulfilling." Teachers may get many questions from their students following this book, so teachers should be ready and aware of the drug cocaine and the effects of it," another teacher wrote. One teacher stated, "It gives us a springboard to discuss the outcomes or potential outcomes of each character's choices and allows us to decide if the choices were good...or not so

good, and hopefully to make-up our minds [about] what we will do if cocaine becomes a choice." However, our teachers were cautious and recommended "...discussing the importance of first informing parents about the contents of the book before reading it to a class."

Several of the students saw this book as a way to illustrate the spiral effects of drugs or to discuss the drug culture: "The repetitions of each page reinforces the chain of events resulting from a drug," a student wrote. The drawings were disturbing - the woman smoking crack had her head on upside down!" Another student responded. "It shows children exactly how cocaine has an effect on people and gives students a real world example of the effects of drug use..."

Nearly half of the teachers said The House That Crack Built was so socially provocative that they were unsure or would definitely not use the text with elementary children. "This book would be quite controversial in a school where children don't have exposure to drugs. Parents may see this as providing too much information." Another wrote. "...it depicts a dark and upsetting theme due to using crack.' "This is too hot a topic," said one teacher, "and it would not necessarily be understood by elementary children."

The Children We Remember ranked third in its provocativeness by teachers, although there was little actual difference between it and the books ranked slightly higher. Why did teachers perceive the book as so socially provocative? After all, the Holocaust is a tragic fact of the 20th Century. The teachers found The Children We Remember disturbing because of its stark photography, direct and frank language, and how the author personalized the Holocaust by using actual names and photos of murdered children. Although 75% of the teachers said they would use the book in elementary school, they felt it was socially provocative because of the harsh reality it portrayed about the extermination of children. "The real pictures make it very realistic... They (readers) could see that it really did occur." Another teacher wrote, "Its powerful message teaches the reality of what occurred during the Holocaust...to read factual information like this book and see actual photographs of people living during this time." "I think that this could be a disturbing topic of conversation, especially with children being killed for religious beliefs."

Teachers' Responses to the Books about Gender

We read two books, The Piggy Book (Brown, 1986) and Zŏra Neale Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree (Miller, 1994), containing the topic of gender equity to the teachers. The Piggy Book humorously examines family roles in a traditional house where the mother has always cooked and cleaned while the father and boys made a mess. Zora Neale Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree is a more serious text containing a variety of issues from the real life of Zora Neale Hurston, but integrated throughout it is the theme of girls not being constrained by social assumptions of what girls should or should not do.

All of the teachers indicated that they would use both of the books in elementary classrooms. Teachers wrote that The Piggy Book was "cute and lighthearted" and that it goes "against the stereotype" of family roles. Many of the teachers provided specific comments about how they would use this book. One teacher said she would have children compare this family with their own, another said she would use it to stimulate discussion about gender roles, one said she would use the book across all of the elementary grades, and another wrote she would tie it to "Mother's Day" in which children would construct coupons promising to provide work around the house.

Teachers' responses to Zora Neale Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree were very positive. Teachers wrote that it was "well illustrated and sensitively written." Another teacher said it was "a very touching story because of how Zora dreamed about doing things and [about] her own good relationship with her mother."

Teachers identified four different topics and themes running through this book: death, ethnicity and heritage, gender, and motivation. They saw death and ethnicity/heritage as the major themes in the book; 11/14 teachers discussed these issues in their written responses. Gender was perceived as a central theme in the book by only eight of the teachers. Although only one of the pages in the text mentions ethnicity and heritage, teachers perceived ethnicity as a major theme -- the text illustrations depicted African Americans and this evidently attracted the white teachers

attention.

Teachers' Responses to the Books about War

We read three illustrated books about war to the teachers, and their responses were varied. They indicated that they would use two of the books, Terrible Things and The Children We Remember in their classrooms, but that they would not use The Faithful Elephants. What is the difference in books?

There are two major differences between The Faithful Elephants, the book teachers would not use, with Terrible Things and The Children We Remember, books they would read to children. The first difference is in the amount of explicitness in discussing death in the three books. In Terrible Things animals disappear from the forest; although readers may assume they are put to death, it is never actually mentioned. In The Children We Remember there is one picture with a Nazi trooper shooting a mother and child and there is harsh sentence saying children were put to death ("Sometimes they put children to death"), but there is no detailed description -- only stark black and white photographs of children who were killed by the Nazis. In addition, the book ends on a hopeful note with pictures of children who survived the war. The Children We Remember may strike some adults more harshly than children because adults have better understanding of the concentration and torture camps.

The concept of death in The Faithful Elephants is explicitly direct. Death lingers in specific detail page after page; it is introduced on the eighth page and is explicit in the remaining pages as the author discusses how the animals were put to death, i.e., through poisoning, deadly syringe, and starvation. Although it might be tempting to argue that the teachers are less willing to select books describing the death of animals than people, this is not the case because animals are used in Terrible Things and teachers were willing to use that book. Explicitness in describing death was one of the features of The Faithful Elephants that distinguished it from the other books we read about war. Teachers accepted cataclysmic events in literature when portrayed in broad strokes or in allegory but graphic details of the sadness of the human experience were not thought to be too

disturbing.

Faithful Elephants is also set apart from Terrible Things and The Children We Remember because of the emotional response it drew from the teachers. Coinciding with Gaskin's theory of association, our teachers identified and shared stronger and more emotional responses to this book than to the others. A few samples from teachers' responses about The Faithful Elephants offer readers a sense of the teachers' emotional in olvement: One teacher wrote, " I would not use this book. There are other ways to portray the horror of war besides using the deaths of two innocent elephants. The war did not cause their deaths. People caused their deaths...I do not like zoos or circuses."Another teacher wrote about the severity of the theme in the book: "I'm not sure children would benefit greatly from using it (The Faithful Elephants). Its message is undoubtedly strong and may be explored (better) though other books." A teacher responded personally to the treatment of animals, "It's too emotional for me. I get very sensitive when it comes to animals. Maybe it is because I once had to put an old dog to sleep. I held him in my arms as he took his last breath. I just don't think I would be able to get the words of the story out." One teachers said, "I am an animal lover and I could never read this out loud because I would be crying. I would not be able to have a discussion about it." "I think this book is too powerful and would upset younger students. The cruelty and waste of the elephants would be too harsh to bring into the classroom." Another wrote, " I think death is something they (students) see on television all the time but do not understand the feelings of it because it is so glorified. This book gives a view about war and killing that isn't always shown on T.V. Or video games. Older children need to be aware of the consequences violence has on everything and everyone."

Playing It Safe

An unexpected pattern emerged in our data. Although the books that we read to the teachers addressed issues of ethnic and social diversity, and were ones which we thought would evoke strong personal responses for the teachers, the teachers often responded impersonally. That is, the teachers were very cautious in their responses to these books. Specifically, they revealed very little

about their own attitudes and values about social differences due to ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, disability, and sexual orientation. Of a total of 150 written samples from the teachers, only eight revealed anything about the teachers' personal lives and opinions.

One of the eight personal responses pertained to physical disability. When we read the book about disability, Be Good to Eddie Lee, one teacher revealed her personal experiences with this issue. "I have a cousin," she wrote, " who has Down Syndrome. I know as a child I didn't feel comfortable around her because I never allowed myself to get to know her."

We expected teachers to display more personal connections to the diversity issues in the literature, but this did not happen. There were only a few exceptions to this. The two books pertaining to gender relationships elicited three personal revelations about this topic. One teacher wrote, "My grandmother in the early 1900's defied her parents and refused to marry the man they had chosen for her." Another teacher responded, "I didn't have a 'traditional household' as they do in the book." And a third teacher wrote, "I think I will share it with my daughter."

Teachers also revealed more about their personal attitudes toward animals than the other issues about social justice. After listening to The Faithful Elephants, two teachers indicated their strong love for animals and their uncomfortableness with the book. "I get very sensitive when it comes to animals," wrote one teacher. And another said, "I am an animal lover." However, the same personally revealing points of view did not appear after the teachers listened to the books about ethnicity, HIV, war, and parental abuse.

Discussion

In this study, white and novice teachers provided written responses to literature about social justice. We learned that the teachers would use eight of the ten books in their own elementary classrooms. They identified some of the books as more emotionally powerful than others and these were the following: The Children We Remember, The House That Crack Built, Daddy, Daddy be There, and Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust. They also perceived three books to be socially provocative: Nappy Hair, The House that Crack Built, The Children We

Remember. They identified The House the Crack Built and The Children We Remember as both socially provocative and emotionally powerful.

Teachers said they would not use two of the books with children. They were not comfortable with Nappy Hair because it focused on the differences between people rather than commonalities. Many expressed awareness of the book's notoriety when a white teacher read it in Brooklyn. Some said they would not use it for that reason alone. The teachers expressed discomfort with Faithful Elephants, and most said they would not use it in elementary classrooms because of the explicit descriptions of how animals were exterminated during W.W.II.

Teaching is known to be a conservative act, and the teachers in this study were no exception. Our teachers wrote cautiously about these books and rarely revealed their personal responses or connections to the issues of diversity contained in the narratives. There was only one exception to this reserved and cautious quality of their written responses and that was with Faithful Elephants. Many teachers shared their personal experiences and love for animals when responding to Faithful Elephants, but this was the only book that revealed such personal voice and identity.

It is a formidable task to broaden, in a short period of time, the world views of white mainstream teachers whose values and attitudes have been shaped over a lifetime. However this collection of written responses to multicultural literature provides evidence for modest success. Teaching for understanding of social diversity is a difficult undertaking. For the most part, white middle class teachers do not recognize how their world views contrast with those of people from different ethnicities and cultural experiences. As a whole, the teachers' written responses conveyed a sense that they wanted to protect children from the harsh realities of everyday living. Their writing indicated that they did not want to emphasize differences among people but instead their commonalities. Teacher education programs must find ways to broaden their students' experiences and attitudes toward social and ethnic diversity, so teachers can better understand and more effectively teach children.

There is no magic bullet to miraculously change the attitudes, knowledge base and values

of novice teachers. Apt-Perkins and Gomez (1993) and Cochran-Smith (1995) believe that teachers must first identify their own biases and prejudices before working with children from low-income minority groups. Novice teachers will learn best from experience, and teacher education programs must have more supervised quality practica in diverse settings. Opportunities for novice teachers to discuss issues of ethnicity, class, gender, and language with experienced and expert adults are invaluable in their learning to become culturally responsive teachers.

Recently, multicultural literature courses of this kind have been criticized as superficial and unlikely to produce significant attitudinal and value change on the part of their readers (Auciello, 2000). We disagree. Certainly, we recognize that courses like this are no panacea for producing complete attitudinal change on the part of middle class, white teachers. Yet, multicultural literature courses may open windows into teachers thinking about classroom pedagogy so that they become less Eurocentric and teacher centered in their own instruction -- these are small but significant changes in a multiethnic country. Multicultural literature courses are particularly important so teachers acquire some understanding about the socio-cultural experiences of children of color. In addition, literature courses will help teachers acquire a knowledge of the titles of books that pertain to the experiences of children they teach. We believe books that are culturally close to children's life experiences will be easier to read when personal connections can be made, and teachers need to be familiar with them.

The teachers in our study did see how they were unconsciously part of a system of advantage that benefitted some and excluded others. We suspect, for the most part, these teachers believed the United States is a meritocracy that fairly awards effort and achievement. Moreover, they seemed to feel uncomfortable discussing the ethnic and cultural differences that are discussed in these books. Consequently, courses of this kind in which teachers are exposed to multiethnic and cultural perspectives must include opportunities for people to examine their own attitudes and values toward social diversity.

The findings of this study suggest that using one course to develop teachers' sensitivity to

diversity can be a rich beginning. Yet we are aware that teacher educators' efforts to change the values and attitudes of white, middle class teachers must take many varied and sustained approaches.

Certain classroom learning activities have been particularly helpful for guiding teachers in the discovery of their own values and attitudes about diversity and understanding the perspectives of others. "Literacy Autobiographies" and "Diversity Time Lines" (Adams, Bell, Griffin, 1998) have been rich learning opportunities for our teachers. We required teachers to write "Literacy Autobiographies" that identified and described their ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, language, and religion. This allowed us to discuss how their sociopolitical membership has contributed or hindered their own literacy development. For most of the teachers, the autobiography revealed their own "white privilege" (McIntosh, 1992), which we discussed in our class meetings. The second activity, "Diversity Time Lines," was completed in class; it required teachers to mark their personal experiences with ethnic and social diversity from birth to present day. This activity, in particular, produces rich discussion, so we used it in small groups. Teachers like to talk about their personal experiences and the small group context provides safety in terms of social risks, that is, teachers do not need to fear that they will say something that is "politically incorrect." These two activities helped teachers see that social and ethnic diversity matter a great deal in our society, and regardless of how much we might think we are "color blind" or "race does not matter," the reality is that it does.

We required teachers to complete a "diversity grid" in which they categorized books according to topics of diversity. We found this helps them become more aware of ethnicity, class, gender, ability, age, sexual orientation, as well as issues of war and peace. Throughout the semester they used these categories when reading the books. The diversity grid could be kept in paper form or used in an Excel program on their computers. Developing this sense of awareness about diversity becomes helpful as they retrieve the names of books for use in their own classrooms.

Throughout our courses we used critical questioning activities to develop teachers' awareness of the portrayal of social structure and power relationships in literature. We used Kohl's (1996) questions about power in the story and asked teachers to answer them: Who has power in the book? Who makes the decisions? How is power distributed among the characters in the story? Who is obeyed and tells the other characters what to do? Teachers used these questions to learn first hand that issues of social and ethnic diversity are pervasive even in children's literature. A second activity, which we like, was developed by Simpson (1996) in which teachers use questioning stems to generate ideas about whose stories are told and whose voices are silenced. By using critical thinking strategies such as these our students acquire clear and direct ways for examining social and political underpinnings of children's literature. In the long term we think these activities will help new teachers examine issues of power and social justice in their own classrooms, schools and communities.

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